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# UKRAINE AS A RELIGIOUS DESTINATION

**By Olga Borysova, Tetiana Huzik And Liudmyla Fylypovych**

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## **Abstract**

The article is devoted to the state, development, and prospects of religious tourism and religious pilgrimage in Ukraine. Based on the interesting and eventful history of this country, and the presence of many sites of spiritual and religious evolution of peoples on its territory, the authors suggest that Ukraine may become a religious destination under certain conditions. The article briefly describes the history of pilgrimage from the ancient Rus' to the modern Ukraine. After 70 years of communist bans on religion and pilgrimage, religious life as well as religious tourism has been restored significantly in independent Ukraine. But this industry has not become an element of national revival that spiritually develops people, enriches them culturally, and also brings profits. Despite Ukraine's poor rating as a religious destination among other countries, it should regain the glory of being a pilgrimage center.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, destination, religious tourism, pilgrimage, sacred objects, tourist potential, creative industry.

## **Relevance of the Research Topic**

According to WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council) experts, religious tourism is an activity related to the provision of services and satisfaction of needs of tourists going to holy places and religious centers located far from their place of residence. The meaning of the concepts "religious tourism" and "religious pilgrimage" needs to be distinguished and differentiated. These concepts are often equated not only in everyday life, but also in laws

and regulations, which is incorrect. Some researchers believe that pilgrimage and religious tourism are two different types of human activity, because religious tourism is a socio-economic activity, and pilgrimage is only a religious one, so there is a difference between these concepts. Other scholars hold to the view that there are two areas within religious tourism. They are pilgrimage and cognitive-excursion. Moreover, there are predictions that "pure" pilgrimage will eventually grow into religious tourism, and this trend is increasingly visible today in European countries. We hold a view that it is more correct to call cognitive-excursion religious tourism as religious tourism while traveling for religious purpose, a scientist can have research goals while any other person can seek to satisfy his cognitive religious interest.

Being a type of specialized tourism, religious tourism is an integral part of the historical and cultural heritage of humanity. Foreign researchers have long and fruitfully realized this position.<sup>1</sup> Ukrainian scholars have also begun to investigate the religious tourism.<sup>2</sup> The consensus among them is that religious tourism has its economic, social, spiritual, cultural niche, and it plays an important role in the system of international and domestic tourism, forming a significant part of the modern tourism industry. Religious tourism has every chance to become a creative industry.

Ukraine is not a destination traditionally considered by tourists; the general perception is that it lacks unique or specific cultural, spiritual, ethnographic sites, landscape

<sup>1</sup> R.Raj and K.Griffin, eds., *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals Management: An International Perspective* (Wallingford, UK: CAB International, 2015); *Encyclopaedia of Tourism*, ed. by Jafar Jafari and Honggen Xiao. (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing 2016). Available at: <http://avayezenderood.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Encyclopedia-of-Tourism.pdf>. K. Griffin and R. Raj, "The Importance of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage: reflecting on definitions, motives and data." *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 5: Iss. 3, Article 2 (2017) Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol5/iss3/2>; Amos S. Ron and Dallen J. Timothy, eds., *Contemporary Christian Travel – Pilgrimage, Practice and Place*. (Bristol, UK, 2019); Maureen Griffiths, Peter Wiltshier, eds., *Managing Religious Tourism*. (New Zealand, 2019); Ruth Dowson, Jabar Yaqub and Razaq Raj, eds., *Spiritual and religious tourism, motivations and management* (Oxfordshire, UK: 2020), etc.

<sup>2</sup> П.Л.Яроцький, "Філософські аспекти паломницького (релігійного) туризму в Україні". В *Філософія туризму*. Ред. В.Пазенок (Київ: Кондор, 2004): 251-258. [P.L. Yarotsky, "Philosophical aspect of pilgrimage (religious) tourism in Ukraine." in *Philosophy of tourism*. Ed. by V.Pazenok. (Kyiv: Kondor, 2004): 251-258]; О.О. Любінцева, С.П. Романчук, *Паломництво та релігійний туризм* (Київ: Альтерпрес, 2011. [O.O. Liubintseva, S.P. Romanchuk, (2011). *Pilgrimage and religious tourism*. Kyiv: Alterpress]; П.Яроцький. "Релігієзнавчий туризм – шлях толерантного сприйняття конфесій». В *Практичне релігієзнавство. Колективна монографія*. Ред. А. Колодний та Л. Филипович (Київ: Українська асоціація релігієзнавців, 2012):122-139. [P. Yarotsky, "Religious studies tourism - a way of tolerant mutual perception of denominations". In *Practical religious studies. Collective monograph*. Ed. by A. Kolodnyi and L. Fylypovych (Kyiv: Ukrainian Association of Religious Studies. 2012): 122-139]. Available at: <https://ure-online.info/praktychne-religiyeznavstvo/>; О.В. Борисова, «Релігійний туризм». В О.В. Борисова, *Спеціалізований туризм* (Київ: Кондор, 2020): 37-91. [O.V. Borysova, "Religious tourism." In O. V. Borysova, *Specialized tourism*. (Kyiv: Condor Publishing House, 2020): 37-91], etc.

or environmental attractions one can't avoid visiting while travelling. And although Ukraine is mentioned in the *Encyclopedia of Tourism*,<sup>3</sup> its description it is not very attractive. One still can't find Ukraine in the list of top places in the world's religious and pilgrimage tourism.<sup>4</sup> The only exceptions are Hasidic Jews,<sup>5</sup> who make a pilgrimage to Ukraine, to the graves of their spiritual teachers (*tzaddiks*). Visits of Orthodox believers from the countries of the former USSR have become extremely rare. They mostly have pilgrimage tours to the Kyiv-Pechersk and Pochayiv Lavra. One can hardly meet pilgrims from America, Canada, and Australia, who visit Greek Catholic sacred objects and the Poles who are interested in religious sites at Lviv or Berdychiv, where there are a lot of Catholic monasteries or cathedrals. But all these trips take place either privately or through the pilgrimage centers of certain churches, without being part of the tourism industry.

Part of the issue may be that no information about sacred Ukraine can be encountered on the worldwide web. Some attempts to find a description of Ukrainian religious objects on popular international tourist sites were regrettably unsuccessful. If there are any descriptions of Ukrainian temples or monasteries they are only mentioned within the framework of the general cultural component of the tourist trip. Meanwhile, Ukraine and Kyiv are considered to be the cradle of Eastern European Christianity. Lviv has become a denominational center for Greek Catholics and Catholics, partly for Protestants. Chernivtsi is the center of the Orthodox metropolis of Bukovyna and the pearl of Old Believers. Uman' and Medzhibozh are Hasidic pilgrimage centers. Muslims, natives, Protestants, Karaites, etc. also have some interesting religious places.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to actualize Ukraine as a center of pilgrimage not only for Hasidim who have successfully mastered religious routes to Ukraine, but also to show a variety of religious tourist opportunities for Christians and others. After all, Ukraine became the homeland of many peoples who professed different religions, leaving behind interesting objects of sacred culture.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Tourism* (2016). Ed. by Jafar Jafari and Honggen Xiao. (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016): 984-986.

<sup>4</sup> In the table «Estimating the Global Scale of Religious Tourism - Examples of Visits to Special Events,» cited by authoritative tourism researchers Kevin Griffin and Razaq Raj, among hundreds of religious events and places Ukraine is never mentioned, while Poland twice ( Sanctuary of Our Lady of Licheń in Licheń Stary, Jasna Gora monastery, Czestochowa), and even (Iasi, Moldavia - Saint Parascheva's Day). In K. Griffin, and R. Raj, "The Importance of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage: reflecting on definitions, motives and data," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 5: Iss. 3, Article 2: Pp. vii. Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol5/iss3/2>.

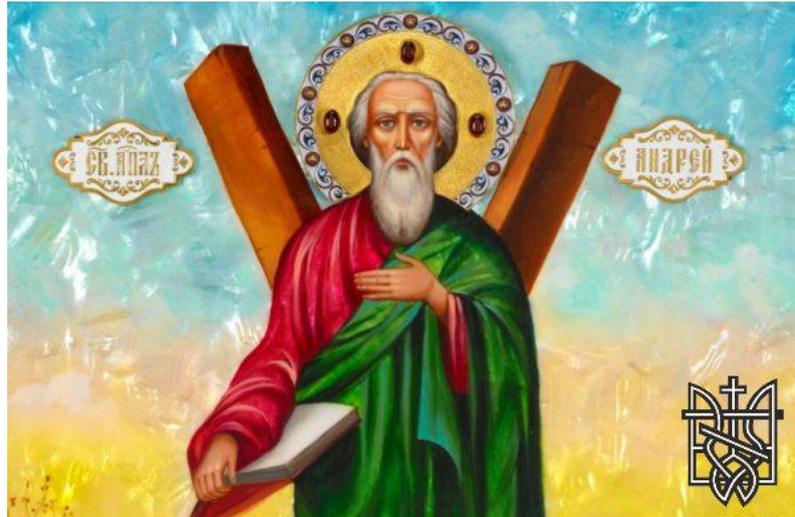
<sup>5</sup> Ihor Turov, and Serhii Ishchuk, (2020). "Hasidism: Ukrainian Origins and the World Context". *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 40 : Iss. 8 , Article 4. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol40/iss8/4>,

## Features of the Development of Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism in Ukraine

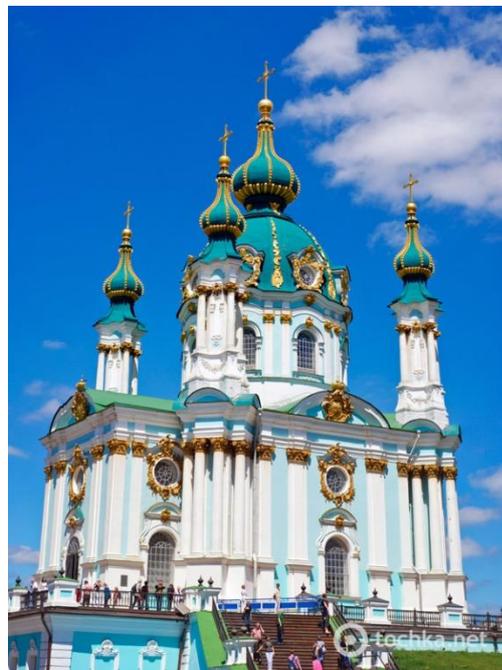
Religious tourism in Ukraine can be traced to Christian times, although the movement of Ukrainian ancestors took place long before. The tribes that inhabited this area probably migrated from east to west and vice versa, possibly even for religious purposes. Numerous graves-burial mounds in which Scythians, Sarmatians, Khazars, and other inhabitants of the steppe were buried can still be found in southern Ukraine. Some of them were looted, but the surviving treasures are now displayed in Ukrainian museums. Tovsta Mohyla is a Scythian mound from the 4th century B.C., world-famous for its Scythian gold pectoral (a chest ornament of the Scythian king).



Ukrainian Christian pilgrimage has transpired since the 11th century. It originated from the tradition of taking individual trips to holy places. St. Andrew the First-Called can be considered as almost the first “religious tourist” who, according to the legend, traveled to Scythia to the banks of the Dnieper in the 1st century.



Temple icon Apostle Andrew in the St. Andrew's Church in Kyiv (see below)



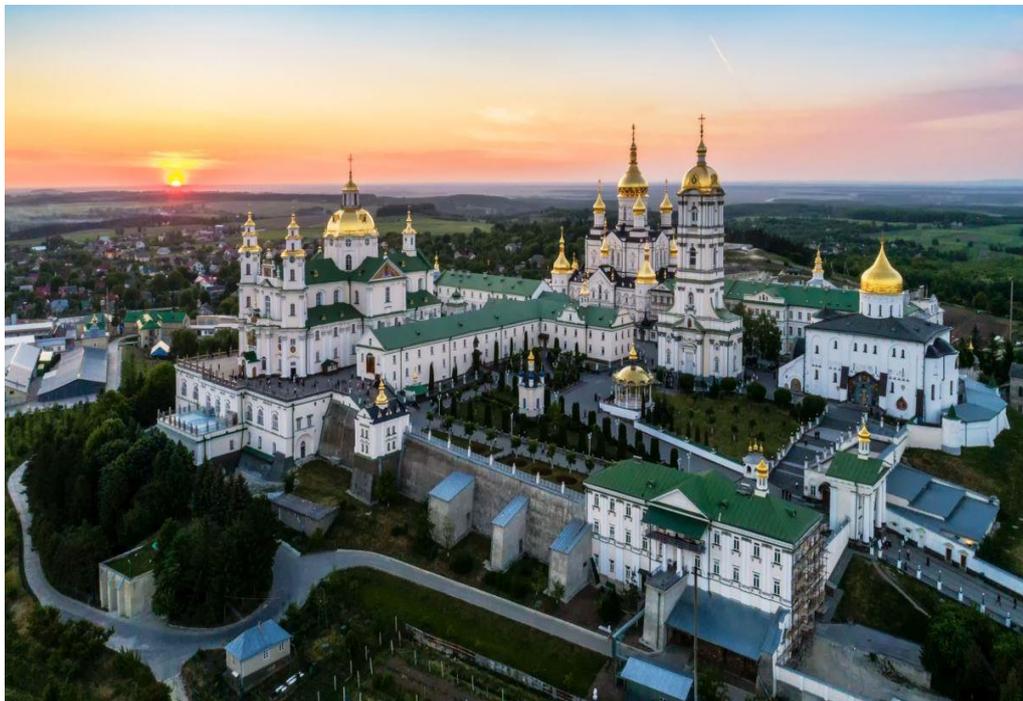
The pages of chronicles and other domestic historical documents testify to the numerous journeys of the ancestors of Ukrainians. Anthony, a celebrated medieval monk and the founder of the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery, the main Orthodox relics of Ukraine, was a famous national pilgrim, who went to Mount Athos twice in his life. He left authentic testimonies and personal impressions from his religious travels. His descriptions contain not only pilgrimage information, but also rich geographical, historical, ethnographic content, including his experience of communication with the Greeks. His well-known "Life and Walking of Daniil, the Rus' Abbot of the Land" testifies to the host's respect for "Rus'

pilgrims" and the pride of our forebears for "their Rus' land." There are also many mentions of other travelers who visited Ukraine at different times.

Monks of the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery founded monasteries in Chernihiv, Pochaiv, and other sites where these monastic complexes with ancient caves are still preserved.



Ancient Chernihiv



Holy Dormition Pochayiv Lavra

The largest flow of pilgrims was observed from the end of the 19th century till the First World War. This was due to the improvement of transport connection and its significant reduction in price. Then the revolutionary events of 1917–1921 established the policy of “state atheism” in Ukraine for more than 70 years, which stopped pilgrimages altogether. Throughout the 1000 years' history of Christianity in Ukraine, the pilgrimage tradition was interrupted only twice: first in the 13th century because of the invasion by the Mongol Horde in Rus', and then in the 20th century when Ukraine was part of the USSR, due to the aforementioned direct or implicit bans on religious life.

However, the revival of religious life began in the late 1980s, which intensified with the collapse of the USSR in 1991. According to statistics in 1986 there were only 4,500 registered religious organizations in Ukraine, while in 1991 there were 12,922.<sup>6</sup> That corresponded with a growing interest in pilgrimage in Ukraine. Given the long period of intense religious prohibition that preceded it, this revival of religious tourism gave rise to the question of which holy places and sacred images can be presented to tourists.

Unfortunately, throughout the history of Ukraine, religious culture and church architecture were repeatedly destroyed. In 1169, Andriy Bogolyubsky, a grandson of Prince Volodymyr Monomakh of Kyiv and a son of Yuri Dovgoruky, the Kyiv founder of Moscow, sent an army that captured Kyiv, looted and damaged historical and ecclesiastical property. In 1240 Khan Batu left the charred ruins of many churches. Church culture also suffered during the Ruin period (1657-1687) of the Ukrainian history, when a lot of Orthodox churches were destroyed under the Polish oppression. Later during Haydamachchyna (popular uprisings against Polish rule) in 1768, the rebels destroyed hundreds of Greek-Catholic and Catholic churches.

The long epoch of destruction of not only architectural monuments, but also of all cultural life of the Ukrainians ended at the end of 17th century. The 18th century became the period of large-scale reconstructions of surviving Ukrainian cathedrals and churches, as well as the construction of new ones. This was connected with the activities of two outstanding spiritual and political figures, Petro Mohyla (1596-1647), Kyiv Orthodox Metropolitan, and

<sup>6</sup> А. Колодний, “Релігійна мережа України: конфесіональний і регіональний вимір”. Українське релігієзнавство. №46. (2008): 23-47. [A. Kolodnyi, “Religious network of Ukraine: confessional and regional sections.” *Ukrainian Religious Studies*. №46. (2008): 23-47]. Available at: <https://uars.info/prints/ur/46/5.pdf>; Релігійна мережа України. Таблиця змін на 1 січня поточного року. *Українське релігієзнавство*. №46. (2008): 426-436. [Religious network of Ukraine. Table of changes with data for January 1 of the corresponding year. *Ukrainian Religious Studies*. - №46. (2008): 426-436] Available at: <https://uars.info/prints/ur/46/26.pdf>.

Ukrainian Hetman Ivan Mazepa (1639-1709), who was awarded a title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire in 1707 for his efforts for the Holy League.



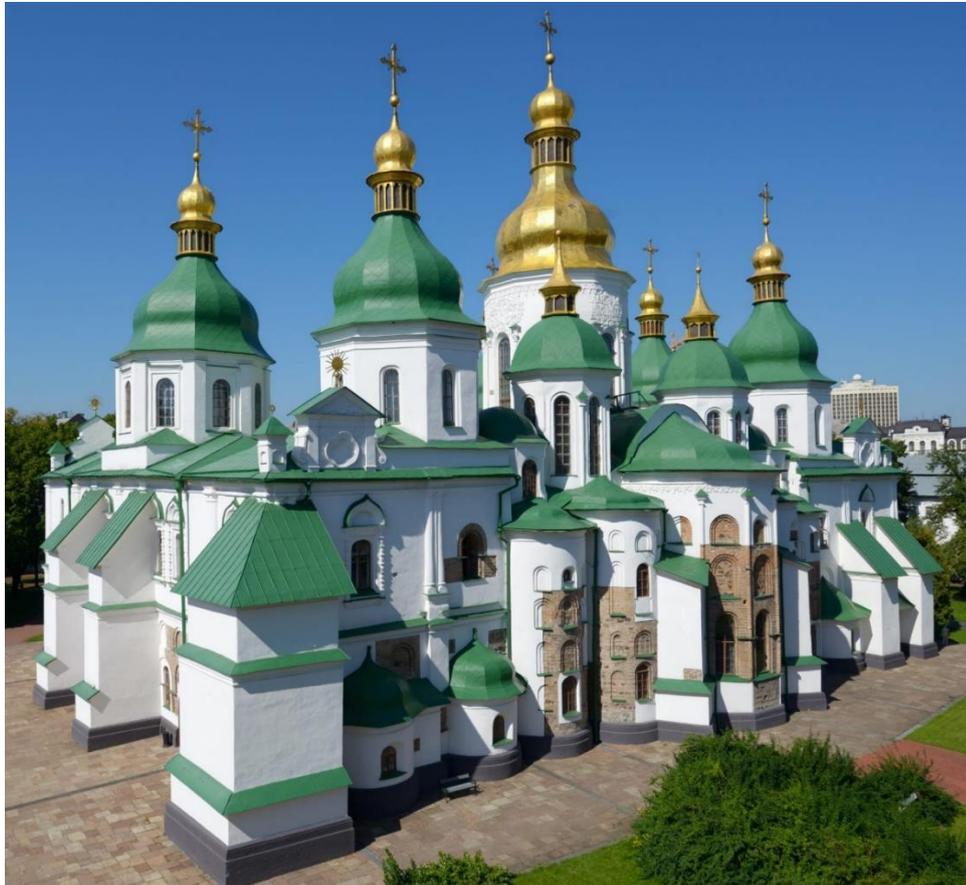
Portrait of Kyiv Metropolitan Petro Mohyla



Portrait of Hetman of Ukraine Ivan Mazepa, People's Artist of Ukraine Natalia Pavlusenko

The result of their efforts was a cultural and architectural revival, the birth of a new artistic style called Ukrainian Baroque. The brightest representative of this style is St. Sophia

Cathedral, a pearl of world architecture, protected by UNESCO. Most of sacred places of Kyiv's historical center and its outskirts that are frequent destinations for sightseeing were also rebuilt and restored at that time.



St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv

During the 18th-19th century, many buildings of special religious significance were constructed in Kyiv, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Zhytomyr, and other cities. The St. Vladimir Cathedral was built at that time and it still adorns Kyiv with its perfect architectural forms, wall paintings and icons. This period was the most active mass pilgrimage to Kyiv. It is known that in one year Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra hosted up to 90,000 pilgrims and had a powerful infrastructure capable of feeding and sheltering flows of pilgrims.<sup>7</sup> Honore de Balzac once wrote, describing Kyiv in 1847, "I saw the northern Rome, a city of Orthodoxy with some

<sup>7</sup> О.О. Любінцева, І.М. Стригун, "Сакральний потенціал Києва і напрямки інтенсифікації його використання". *Географія і туризм*. Вип. 32 (2015): 92. [O.O. Liubintseva, and I.M. Strygun, "Sacral potential of Kyiv and directions of intensification of its use". *Geography and Tourism*, Issue. 32 (2015.): 92.

300 churches, the wealth of the Lavra, St. Sophia ... It is worthwhile to see them at least once ...."<sup>8</sup>

In the 20th century, however, the communist regime caused a real tragedy for Ukraine's temples. The monumental sacred Kyiv was itself a silent witness and indisputable proof of Ukraine's majestic ancient history, a symbol that denied all the ideological historical myths imposed on the people by the Soviet government, despite the fact that direct refutation and social rebellion were impossible.

In the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks looted the Ukrainian churches, confiscating all church property, ostensibly to fight the famine of 1921–1923, although no documents on the intended use of these funds were found.<sup>9</sup> Later, they launched a real anti-religious terror in Ukraine, as Stalin signed a decree in 1932 which proclaimed "the name of God should be forgotten throughout the territory of the USSR" by May 1, 1937. A brutal violent secularization began.<sup>10</sup> All over Ukraine churches were closed, turned into clubs, warehouses, cinemas, gyms, and similar institutions.

This was accompanied by the physical destruction of ancient church buildings in Kyiv and other cities. This fate befell St. Michael's Cathedral, first mentioned in the Chronicle of Ancient Times on July 11, 1108. At that time, it was the only church that had a golden bath and was named "Golden-Domed." The cathedral was decorated with numerous frescoes and mosaics, unique works of art by ancient masters. In 1937, under the pretext of building a new government quarter, the authorities demolished St. Michael's Cathedral, and all its frescoes and mosaics were taken to Moscow, Leningrad, and Novgorod. None of them have been returned yet. Almost all 300 of Kyiv's churches were destroyed and, by the beginning of the Second World War, only four churches remained in the city.

<sup>8</sup> *Ukraine in foreign comments and descriptions from the VIth to XXth century*. By Volodymyr Sichynsky. (New York: Published by Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, 1953): 209.

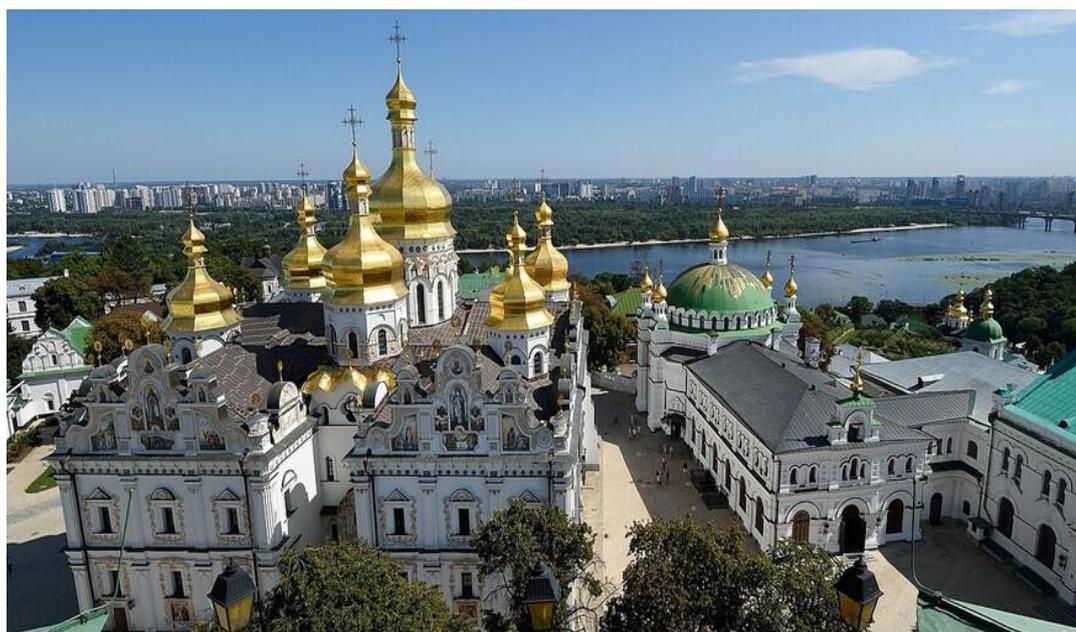
<sup>9</sup> Л. Бабенко, "Участь Чека-ГПУ органів у вилученні церковних цінностей на початку 20-х років". [L. Babenko, "Participation of the Cheka-GPU bodies in the seizure of church valuables in the early 1920s." Available at: <http://dspace.nbuv.gov.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/40060/16-Babenko.pdf?sequence=1>.

<sup>10</sup> S. Luehrmann, "The modernity of manual reproduction. Soviet Propaganda and the Creative Life of Ideology". *AnthroSource*, 2011, 21 July. Available at: <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2011.01103.x>.



Golden-Domed St. Michael's Cathedral

In 1941, retreating from Kyiv, the Bolsheviks blew up the Holy Dormition Cathedral of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. St. Sophia, an 11th-century monument, was badly damaged too. The restored cathedrals in order to memorialize the tragedy of Kyiv's churches should become an object of domestic and international tourism. It is necessary to show where these sacred buildings stood and explain what happened to them and how and when some of them were rebuilt in order to return the Spirit to the sacred places that had lived in them for centuries.



## Holy Dormition Cathedral of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra

Pilgrimage in and to the USSR was also banned. The government deliberately did not permit travel by Soviet people abroad and sharply limited the entrance of foreigners. The Cold War affected all spheres of life, including tourism. The Communist Party, being afraid of negative influence of international guests on its citizens, limited them to few places of sightseeing such as Moscow, Leningrad, and partly Kyiv. It was possible for the government to provide services at the appropriate level, as well as to track the unauthorized movements of international tourists. In 74 years of the USSR's existence, it never gained the fame of a tourist Mecca. A trip to the USSR meant visiting a country of total despotism and persecution. In 1991, the year of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of a deep crisis, the countries of the former Soviet Union lost much of the limited resources they had in the tourism sector.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, tourism did not become the source of increasing revenue to Ukraine's economy despite its potential. Unfortunately, tourism remains untapped, and its role in the country's economy has not been defined, information work is neglected. Moreover, there is a lack of qualified personnel and charismatic top managers; the level of the tourist business and services does not meet world standards. In 2017, the added value received from the tourist industry amounted to \$1.3 billion, which is one of the lowest in Europe.<sup>11</sup> There is also a negative trend in the number of international visitors, which is probably due to the low rating of Ukraine in terms of security (127th place out of 136).<sup>12</sup> In 2019, Ukraine received a little more than \$2 million from international travelers. At the same time, neighboring Poland, with almost the same figures, increased its budget under the same revenue item by \$14.3 billion.<sup>13</sup>

However, Ukrainians are eager to revive their historical memory, using the opportunities of tourism in service of this. The industry has repeatedly been tasked to increase the share of tourism in GDP up to 10%, which will correspond to the level of developed countries. This should be facilitated by deregulating business, simplifying

<sup>11</sup> Б. Данилишин, "Туризм як каталізатор економічного розвитку". [B. Danylyshyn, "Tourism as a catalyst for economic development"]. Available at: <https://investory.news/bogdan-danilishin-turizm-yak-katalizator-ekonomichnogo-rozvitku/>.

<sup>12</sup> «Туристический поток...» ["Tourist flows..."]. Available at: <https://112.ua/obshchestvo/turisticheskiy-potok-iz-ispanii-v-pervom-polugodii-2019-g-sokratilsya-na-327-po-sravneniyu-s-proshlym-godom-minekonomrazvitiya-503763.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Economic Impact Reports. Available at: <https://wtcc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>.

obtaining tourist visas for non-residents, increasing the number of low-cost routes to Ukraine and the like.

Each country is unique and has its own special appeal in terms of potential tourists. Experts have analyzed TRIPADVISOR data from 197 countries and classified the following four types of tourist attractions: natural, historical, religious, and purely tourist. The world's tourist destinations are dominated by natural sites, while in Europe they are mostly historical. Ukraine in terms of tourism is currently associated with largely natural sites, while historical, cultural, spiritual, gastronomic, and other potentials remain, using the terminology of Western researchers, "undercapitalized."<sup>14</sup>

In our opinion, in this situation it is important to conceptually define the following:

- What kind of tourism and in what areas is worth developing in Ukraine?
- Which locations are the most attractive for both international and domestic visitors?
- What infrastructure should be built to increase tourist flows to Ukraine?
- What are the personnel requirements for tourism professionals to implement successful projects?

Special attention should be paid to the potential of religious and pilgrimage tourism, as these types of tourism are a powerful tool in the revival and development of spiritual and cultural objects of multi-religious Ukraine. This is important for the Ukrainians to increase their level of historical and cultural knowledge about their own country. It also promotes the acquaintance of both domestic and international travelers with the religion and culture of the Other (for the Ukrainians with the culture of non-Orthodox residents of Ukraine) and make it possible for any person to take a "journey inside yourself," to comprehend one's own inner world as it relates to the eternal.

As a country with a rich and eventful history, Ukraine should take care to protect and preserve its history and culture. It becomes even more important nowadays because a purely mercantile attitude to reality prevails in Ukraine's society, while a powerful spiritual component recedes. At present, it is historical and cultural sites that make it possible to organically combine the material and spiritual issues in the Ukrainian cultural space.

<sup>14</sup> Б. Данилишин, "Туризм як каталізатор економічного розвитку". [B. Danylyshyn, "Tourism as a catalyst for economic development"]. Available at: <https://investory.news/bogdan-danilishin-turizm-yak-katalizator-ekonomichnogo-rozvitku/>.

## Statistics on Tourism in Ukraine

Basic ideas about the state of the tourism sector in Ukraine are given by official statistics by the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine (2000–2010), State Statistics Service (since 2011). They help create a picture of international interest in visiting Ukraine, as well as the target audience that may be interested in its sacred objects.

In 2019 the statistics show the following data: out of 83,703 international tourists, most are British 10,647, then Egyptians 10,396, Poles 8,404, Moldovans 7,865, Turks 5,034, Americans (USA) 4,016, Germans 4,003, Belarusians 3,013, Turkmen 2,748, Indians 2,569, Dutch 1,535, Israelis 1,499, Austrians 1,311, Japanese 1,150, Latvians 1,145, Russians 1,131, Chinese 1,125, and Greeks 1,082.<sup>15</sup> These figures on their own say little. But if they are compared with the total population of the countries from which the tourists came, one can see which countries show more interest in Ukraine.

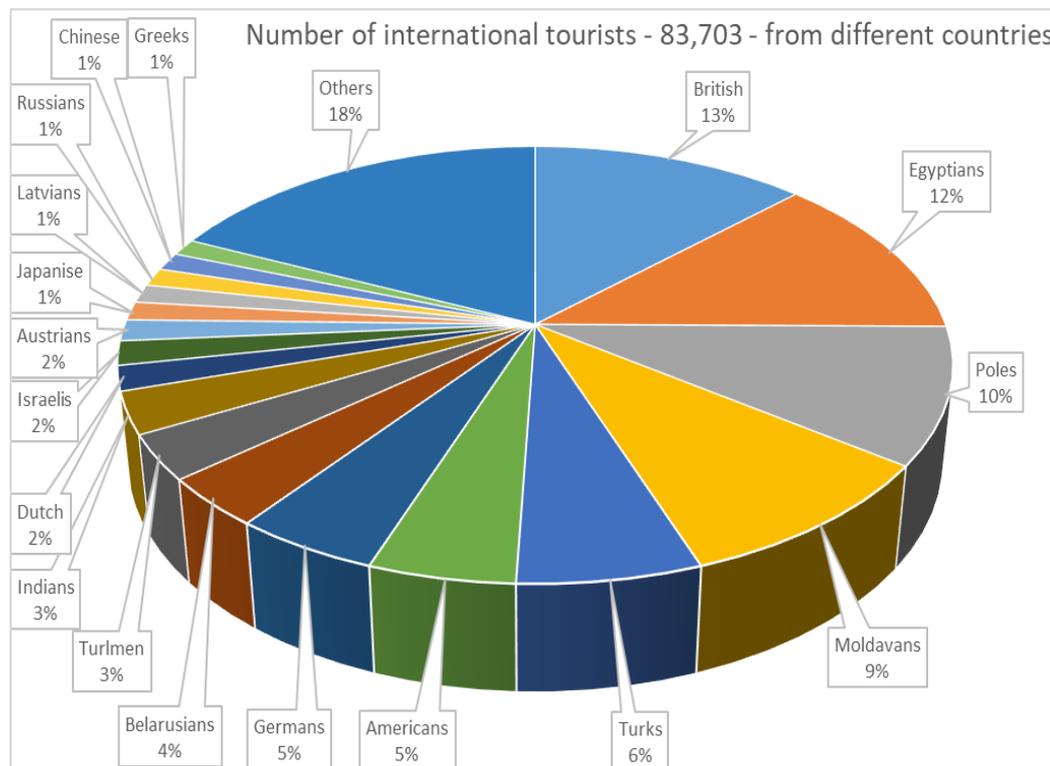
The largest percentage are Moldovans, with 2.85% of tourists per 3.5 million population of Moldova. The British are 0.016%, the Egyptians 0.010%, the Poles 0.02%. As for the number of Belarusians arriving in the country, it accounts for 0.03% of the total population of 9.5 million. Of the 1.92 million Latvians tourists account only for 0.059%. India's total population is 1.353 billion people and 2569 tourists who came to Ukraine is only 0.0019%.

Thanks to WTTC calculations, the geography of international tourists is known: 32% from Moldova, 17% from Belarus, 11% from the Russian Federation, 8% from Poland, 8% from Hungary.<sup>16</sup> These figures show that very few people travel to Ukraine. The majority of "international" tourists, that is 60%, are from the countries of the former Soviet Union, so they can be considered "international" only tentatively. Therefore, Ukraine still remains an unknown country for most foreigners. Ukraine is increasingly regarded a country of unrealized tourist opportunities, although it is recognized as one of the largest nations in Eastern Europe with rich climatic, tourist, and recreational resources. It is also one of the most religious countries in Europe. Having become a member of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 1997, Ukraine has not yet taken advantage of this status as an integral part of the world tourism process. According to most researchers and experts, religious tourism in Ukraine is still more domestic in nature than international.

<sup>15</sup> Туристична діяльність в Україні. Архів. Туристична діяльність в Україні в 2019 році. [Tourist activity in Ukraine. Archive. Tourist activity in Ukraine in 2019]. Available at: [http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2019/tyr/tyr\\_dil/arch\\_tyr\\_dil.htm](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2019/tyr/tyr_dil/arch_tyr_dil.htm).

<sup>16</sup> Economic Impact Reports. Available at: <https://wtcc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>.

How many tourists and from which countries do they travel to Ukraine? In 2019 the statistics show the following data:<sup>17</sup>



In recent years, the number of Ukrainian tourists making pilgrimages to the relics of their country has increased significantly. But it is almost impossible to calculate the number of domestic travelers, because they do not use agencies and instead travel on their own or at the initiative of the clergy. International tourists who come to Ukraine for religious purposes are also not included in statistics. The approximate annual number of Hasidic pilgrims is from 30,000 to 40,000, but they are not in table 2.9, distribution of incoming (international) tourists. Out of 83,703 tourists in 2019, 5,232 came for business reasons, 58,404 for recreation, 2,390 for health purposes, 194 athletes, 16,874 special tourism (not specified), and 422 for other purposes.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Туристична діяльність в Україні. Архів. Туристична діяльність в Україні в 2019 році. [Tourist activity in Ukraine. Archive. Tourist activity in Ukraine in 2019]. Available at: [http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2019/tyr/tyr\\_dil/arch\\_tyr\\_dil.htm](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2019/tyr/tyr_dil/arch_tyr_dil.htm).

<sup>18</sup> Туристична діяльність в Україні. Архів. Туристична діяльність в Україні в 2019 році. Таблиця 2.9. [Tourist activity in Ukraine. Archive. Tourist activity in Ukraine in 2019]. Table 2.9]. Available at: [http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2019/tyr/tyr\\_dil/arch\\_tyr\\_dil.htm](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2019/tyr/tyr_dil/arch_tyr_dil.htm).

In the 21st century religious tourism is present in almost every segment of the tourism business. Foreign experts divide it into the following components:<sup>19</sup> 1) travel to religious destinations; 2) trips to religious gatherings and events; 3) travel for missionary and/or humanitarian purposes; 4) trips of religious like-minded people. The motives for religious travel are different. Among the most typical ones are:

- ritual celebration of religious holidays (pilgrims and tourists can take part as spectators); spiritual self-improvement (this motivation in religious tourism is inherent in both pilgrims and ordinary tourists);
- raising one's status in a religious community (the motive of the trip, which applies only to pilgrims);
- worship of the holy place, temples, relics, spiritual and physical healing (this goal is typical only for pilgrims);
- curiosity, obtaining aesthetic pleasure from architecture, painting, iconography, church singing (for all categories of tourists).

However, there is a series of non-religious and non-pilgrimage tourist trips, in which to some extent there may be religious motives, and such tourists can also be actively involved in religious tourism.

### **Opportunities for Religious Tourism in Ukraine**

Religious tourism is a young branch of Ukraine's economy, and it is not without its problems. Repeated state audits of the tourism industry recorded, in particular, the lack of growth of budget revenues provided by the tourism industry. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was stated that the growth rate of budget revenues from the tourism industry did not meet the objectives set by the State Program for Tourism Development. The audits identified a number of reasons that hinder the efficiency of funds and do not allow the planned profitability of the tourism industry.<sup>20</sup>

To reach the level of budget revenue it is necessary to increase quality of tourist services. This depends on the improvement of the environment, the development of road infrastructure, the increase of comforts via accommodation and food, restoration of cultural

<sup>19</sup> Table 3: Classification of Christian Pilgrimage sites in Europe. In Griffin, Kevin and Raj, Razaq, "The Importance of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage: reflecting on definitions, motives and data." *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 5: Iss. 3, (2017). Article 2. Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol5/iss3/2>.

<sup>20</sup> I.I. Нікіфорова, "Країна з нереалізованими туристичними можливостями". [I.I. Nikiforova, "A country of unrealized tourist opportunities"]. Available at: <http://www.dkrs.gov.ua/kru/uk/publish/article/35428;jsessionid=1B88A8D6046B69D1BDE1CD568C18D2FF>.

monuments and architecture, etc. Advertising is also an important factor in creating a positive image of Ukraine as a tourist destination abroad, stimulating the interest of non-residents to visit Ukraine, and acquainting them with its tourist, historical and cultural potential. To promote religious tourism in tourism markets in many countries, religious organizations and associations, often with the participation of tourism companies, regularly hold specialized exhibitions, exchanges, congresses, conferences, etc. Conferences and congresses are often included in the program of exhibitions and fairs. There is a trend of developing new forms of festivals, theatrical performances, creating new places of interest, etc. Ukraine, however, has some problems with this today.<sup>21</sup>

The year 2020 has shown that religious tourism, in particular pilgrimage, retains its potential. The Hasidim came to Uman' to the grave of their *tzaddik* in September 2020, despite the severe quarantine regime.<sup>22</sup> It proves that not all believers are ready to give up the worship at their shrines even in such circumstances. Covid-19 pandemic did not frighten the participants of the traditional Assumption Orthodox processions from Brailov and Kamianets-Podilskyi to Pochayiv Lavra, which was attended by 10,000 pilgrims.<sup>23</sup> Thus, religious tourism, even experiencing *force majeure*, is the most stable type of tourism today.

Tourist professionals single out religious tourism as one of the most promising types of tourist tours in the 21st century, as about 3–3.5 billion trips are made for pilgrimage or religious purposes. Religious tourism in Ukraine is carried out by travel agencies, which include a religious element as part of general excursions or as an independent item.

Religious tourism performs many functions that help to reveal the whole set of meanings and forms of sacred objects of cultural heritage.<sup>24</sup> It also takes care of people's social and cultural needs in tourism services, because it has such a socio-cultural characteristic as a social practice that changes a person and her/his position in the social

<sup>21</sup> Д.С.Улаєва, “Просування релігійного туризму на туристичному ринку України”. [D.S. Ulaeva, “Promotion of religious tourism on the tourist market of Ukraine.” Available at: [http://dspace.univer.kharkov.ua/bitstream/123456789/12351/2/Ulaeva\\_magistr\\_2016.pdf](http://dspace.univer.kharkov.ua/bitstream/123456789/12351/2/Ulaeva_magistr_2016.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> “Умань без хасидів, хасиди без Умані”. [“Uman' without Hasids, Hasids without Uman'”]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-54224327>.

<sup>23</sup> “УПЦ-МП проводить хресний хід до Почаївської лаври незважаючи на карантин”. “The UOC-MP (Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate) is conducting a procession to the Pochaiv Lavra despite quarantine. Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3084558-upc-mp-provodit-hresnu-hodu-do-pochaivskoi-lavri-popri-karantin.html>.

<sup>24</sup> О.В. Борисова, *Спеціалізований туризм* (Київ: Кондор, 2020): 40-41. [O.V. Borysova, *Specialized tourism*. (Kyiv: Kondor, 2020): 40-41.]

space. Thus, religious tourism is becoming an increasingly socially significant phenomenon.<sup>25</sup>

In Ukraine, after Russia's occupation of the Crimea, where significant Muslim shrines were located (the Khan Uzbek mosque in the Old Crimea, the Big Khan mosque in Bakhchisarai, etc.), the number of sacred Muslim sites has decreased. But pagan, Christian, and Jewish places of worship remain available for tourists and pilgrims. More than a thousand of such sacred places can become a center for active tourism. In addition to Kyiv with its already above mentioned sacred images, there are many other relics which are significant to the history of not only Ukraine but also neighboring countries.



Crimea religious sites

Therefore, in the sacred space of the European cultural world, Ukraine is a country of significant pilgrimage routes, which is an important foundation for the development of all forms of religious tourism, both domestic and international.

<sup>25</sup> С.А. Павленко, “Культурний потенціал релігійного туризму: формування українського досвіду”. Дисертація з культурології (Доктор філософії) / Національна академія управління культури і мистецтва (Київ, 2028). [S.A. Pavlenko, “Cultural potential of religious tourism: formation of the Ukrainian experience.” Dissertation of Cultural Studies (Doctor of Philosophy) / National Academy of Management of Culture and Arts (Kyiv, 2018)].

## **Conclusions**

Modern religious tourism is unique in its ability to acquaint people with different religions and cultures, establishing a dialogue and friendly relations with representatives of other cultures from different regions and countries. Religious tourism forms tolerance and a more comprehensive understanding of life, spiritual life in particular. It also has a competitive socio-cultural potential and meets the socio-cultural needs of people. The pilgrimage form of tourism has powerful ideological opportunities to promote interfaith and intercultural communications, as well as to preserve the cultural diversity of the country and the world. The functioning of the religious tourism phenomenon and its spiritual content affect the tourist activity and society's cultural level focusing on significant transformations of the modern socio-cultural sphere, as a result of which the tourist experience becomes socially important.

Tourism in Ukraine today is still a poorly developed sector of the economy, with religious tourism in its infancy. It lacks clear concept, content, or information sources. Therefore, in our point of view, it is worth launching a website that accumulates information on existing forms of religious tourism and pilgrimage, on routes and sacred sites offered by travel agencies, tour operators and pilgrimage centers. This would provide people with relevant and comprehensive information, monitoring and analyzing the tourist services market.

Ukraine has a vast cultural and natural heritage. Popular tourist routes were developed and many religious sights were seen by tourists in the past, but they did not meet world standards quite well. In recent years, there has been a growing interest of tourists in the religious tourism market. Therefore, Ukraine needs to make effective use of the opportunities opening up.

Having a strong potential for the development of religious tourism, Ukraine has not yet used it fully and effectively. Among the reasons are:

- underdeveloped infrastructure; lack of information on available resources and routes;
- weak links between travel agencies and religious organizations;
- lack of qualified personnel in this area.

But the activity of pilgrimage services and tourist organizations with the support of state institutions can jointly revive, preserve, and arrange objects of spiritual culture, historical monuments, places of pilgrimage, equip and develop them and create a proper wealth, cultural environment and comfort around them.

The crisis of the global tourism industry, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has done significant harm to the entire tourism sector of Ukraine's economy. But it opens a unique window of opportunities for Ukraine to become a world-famous religious destination. The WTTC drew attention to this, urging public and private sector leaders to work together to pave the way for the economic recovery needed for the travel and tourist industry and create millions of jobs.

On October 8, 2020, an international plan was published for the recovery of the tourism industry.<sup>26</sup> The G20 tourism ministers called for international coordination between governments to resume efficient operations and international travel. This should become a component of Ukraine's strategic policy in the field of tourism, turning it into an attractive religious destination.

<sup>26</sup> "World Travel & Tourism Council. During historic G20 Tourism meeting, WTTC and global Travel & Tourism CEOs present plan to save 100 million jobs." Available at: <https://wtcc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Press%20Releases/WTTC%20and%20CEOs%20present%20plan%20to%20save%20100%20million%20jobs.pdf?ver=2020-10-08-141524-460>.

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